



# Department of Justice

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## **FINAL TWO DEFENDANTS SENTENCED IN FEDERAL CAR-JACKING CASE**

**MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA**— Wayne Ware, 25, and James Steiner, 21, were sentenced today for their role in a violent car-jacking case involving four teenage victims and a fifth man who tried to come to their aid. The 20-year prison term imposed on Ware and more than 16 years handed out to Steiner were the culmination of a four-day jury trial that saw both men convicted on charges of conspiracy, carjacking and discharging a firearm during and in furtherance of a crime of violence. The latter charge – a violation of 18 U.S.C. 924(c) – carries with it a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years imprisonment.

At trial, the evidence established that on the night of January 16, 2009, Ware, Steiner, and two other men – Jihad Walker, 20, and Torie Wilson, 23 – followed a white Chevy Impala carrying the victims – two boys and two girls, all under the age of 20 – from the Ft. Deposit Chevron station to an isolated country road on the outskirts of town. After intentionally causing an accident with the Impala, the four men got out of their own vehicle and approached the victims. Two of the men had guns and began firing shots in the direction of the Impala. While the victims were attempting to drive away, their car accidentally backed into a ditch. Two of the victims were able to escape on foot into the surrounding woods, but the others were unable to flee and were robbed at gunpoint.

After the robbery, the four assailants discovered that their own vehicle would not start and forced the victims to turn over their keys. The men then held the victims at gunpoint while they pushed the victims' car out of the ditch. As that was happening, a pickup truck drove up to the scene of the accident and slowed down to assist the stranded motorists. Additional shots were fired at the truck, which drove off to notify police. The assailants then sped away in the victims' car, leaving their own vehicle at the scene. The driver of the pickup truck received minor injuries when a round went through his windshield, but the four teenage victims were not physically hurt during the crime.

Walker and Wilson were subsequently prosecuted and elected to plead guilty. Multiple witnesses identified Wilson as one of the shooters, and in February of this year he was sentenced to serve 191 months in federal prison. Walker – who did not carry a gun during the crime – agreed to cooperate with the investigation and prosecution of the other three men, and in exchange for his testimony at trial received a reduced sentence of 57 months imprisonment.

In sentencing Ware and Steiner, the Honorable W. Keith Watkins noted the sentences he imposed – 240 months and 195 months respectively – were in line with what their co-conspirators had received, especially considering that the two men before him still had not accepted responsibility for their crimes. Observing that a jury found them guilty, Judge Watkins said that he agreed with the verdict and that he had found the testimony of the victims to be both “credible and powerful.” Both sentences fell near the top of the advisory range recommended by the United States Sentencing Guidelines. As part of their sentences, when they are released from prison, both men will spend an additional five years on supervised release.

The case was investigated as part of the Department of Justice’s Project Safe Neighborhoods and Middle District of Alabama’s Alabama ICE programs, aimed at preventing violent crime and the illegal possession and use of firearms.

This case was investigated through the joint efforts of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (“ATF”), the Alabama Bureau of Investigation, the Lowndes County Sheriff’s Office, and the Fort Deposit Police Department. The trial was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Matthew Shepherd and Louis V. Franklin, Sr. Assistant United States Attorney Nathan D. Stump handled the case at sentencing.